THE ROMANCE OF THE ENGLISH BIBLE

BY JOHN T. FARIS

William Tyndale

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FOREWORD

No novelist ever conceived a romance so marvelous as the story of how God preserved his Word through the centuries. Fire and earthquake and war have blotted many things out of existence, but God's Word has been kept for his people. Mighty kings and emperors have tried to destroy the Word, but he that sitteth in the heavens has laughed at them.

Only the outlines of the wonderful story can be told in these pages. It is hoped that the reader will be led to inquire for some of the more ambitious volumes in which the story is told more fully.

I

IN THE DAYS OF THE MANUSCRIPTS

To-day a book is called a *volume*. The word has an interesting history. It comes from the Latin, and means "something rolled up." During the centuries before Christ the books of the law, of history, of poetry and of prophecy, which we call the books of the Old Testament, were written by the scribes on papyrus or parchment. The papyrus or parchment was fastened to a stick, as charts or maps are fastened to-day—with this difference, of course: the sticks on which maps are rolled are placed at top and bottom, while the sticks for the ancient volumes were attached to either end of the long parchment, the writing being at right angles to the sticks. When a parchment was ready for the reader it was rolled upon the left-hand stick. On the right-hand stick the parchment was rerolled as the text was read—for the Hebrews read from right to left.

It was probably such a volume, or roll, that Hilkiah, the priest, found in the temple and sent to King Josiah. II Chron. 34: 14-18. The roll of the prophecy of Isaiah delivered to Jesus when he entered into the synagogue at Nazareth must have been of the same general description.

The rolls were copied and recopied by the scribes to whom this work was committed, so that many copies of the books of the Old Testament must have been in existence in the time of Christ. Yet the oldest Hebrew manuscript so far discovered was prepared in the tenth century after Christ!

However, we have older Bible manuscripts than this. More than one hundred years before Christ, learned men finished translations of the Old Testament, as well as a number of other books which are called *apocryphal* or *unrecognized*. The work thus completed was called the *Septuagint,* meaning "seventy," probably because the translation was authorized by the Sanhedrin of seventy members, or because of the tradition that seventy-two men had done the work in seventy-two days. This tradition has no basis in fact; it is known that the translation required the work of many men

during a period of about one hundred and fifty years.

More than three hundred and thirty manuscripts of the Septuagint (or LXX)—in whole or in part—are now treasured in various museums and libraries. The oldest fragment dates from the third century after Christ. This was not discovered until 1903, at Oxyrhynchus, in Egypt. Scholars are eagerly searching for still earlier manuscripts.

Other famous manuscripts of the Septuagint are known as Codex Alexandrinus, or "A," which is in the British Museum; Codex Sinaiticus, or "S," to be seen in the Imperial Library at St. Petersburg; Codex Ephraem, or "C," the treasure of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris.

The Septuagint was the standard version of the Old Testament books in use among Christians until Jerome prepared the Vulgate or Latin version from the Hebrew. Though Jerome's work was completed in the fourth century, the earliest known manuscript of the Vulgate dates from the seventh or eighth century. Few of the more than eight thousand manuscripts so far discovered are older than the thirteenth or fourteenth century.

The first manuscripts of the books of our New Testament were written by Paul when he sent his letters to the churches. These manuscripts were preserved by those who received them, and frequently copies were sent to other churches. The Gospels and the other books of the New Testament also were prepared and multiplied by scribes.

Many of the scribes who copied the manuscripts were connected with monasteries. Copying was often their sole employment. Frequently they were excused from the rough work of gardening, and so forth, in which all the other monks had to share, in order that their hands might be kept in the best possible condition for writing.

The manuscripts were usually beautifully prepared and illuminated on vellum or parchment. They were of two kinds—Uncials, written in capital letters; and Cursives, written in a running hand. The ordinary Uncial manuscript was written without spaces, accents or punctuation marks. Abbreviations, which were frequently used, were marked by a stroke above the letters.

The strange appearance of the Greek manuscript thus prepared may be illustrated by this

arrangement of the English words of John 14:1, 2.

LETNOTYOURHEARTBETROUBLED
BELIEVEINGDBELIEVEALSOINMEIN
MYFATHERSHOUSEAREMANYMANS
IONSIFITWERENOTSOIWOULDHAVE
TOLDYOUFORIGOTOPREPAREAPLAC
EFORYOU

Of all the New Testament manuscripts prepared by the scribes we have to-day only one hundred and twelve Uncials and about thirty-five hundred Cursives. The oldest of the Uncials dates from about the middle of the fourth century, while the oldest of the Cursives dates from the ninth century.

Only two of the Uncials contain the entire New Testament. The story of the discovery of one of these—Codex Sinaiticus—gives a hint of the wonderful way in which God has preserved the Bible through the centuries.

This story takes us to Arabia, where—at the foot of Mount Sinai—St. Catherine's Convent was built by order of the Emperor Justinian on the supposed site of the burning bush from which God spoke to Moses, commanding him to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. One of the treasures of the convent was a valuable

library, largely made up of manuscripts. These were esteemed of little value, and the inmates were gradually using them up for fuel.

In 1844 Constantine Tischendorf, a German scholar, determined to find his way to the convent, hoping to discover manuscripts said to be there. It was comparatively easy to reach the walls, but he found it a difficult proposition to persuade the residents to admit him. Finally he gained his point, and was lifted to the entrance high up on the wall by a rude elevator fastened to a rope which wound around a drum turned by four of the monks. He searched through the library, but, although he saw many rare manuscripts, there was nothing of the kind he had in mind.

He was about to leave the convent when he was attracted by a basketful of parchments, intended, as he learned, for kindling. Eagerly turning them over he found several leaves of the Old Testament in Greek, parts of a manuscript older than any Bible manuscript of which he knew. He begged to be allowed to carry away the "kindling," and succeeded in securing forty-three pages. The rest of the basketful was carefully carried back to the library. Tischendorf's eagerness had revealed

to the monks the real value of the kindling! In the quiet of his own cell, the German scholar examined the leaves, and identified them as an important part of the Old Testament, including four or five books. In vain he pleaded for other sheets; the monks were firm in their refusal.

For years Tischendorf dreamed of securing this manuscript treasure of St. Catherine's. Again in 1854 he sought the monks, but without success. After waiting five years more he was for the third time the guest of the monks of St. Catherine's. They were courteous, but still refused to grant his request.

Sick at heart, the scholar had made arrangements to go back home when the steward asked him to go to the steward's cell to see a copy of the Septuagint he had been reading. The bulky volume, wrapped carefully in red cloth, proved to be the long-desired fragments of the Old Testament, the entire New Testament, as well as several other manuscripts. With beating heart, but with assumed carelessness, Tischendorf asked to take the book to his room in order to examine it more at his leisure. Once by himself, the cloak of indifference was laid aside. Eagerly he lit

his lamp, and all night long he toiled to copy a part of the manuscript which gave a version of an epistle as yet unknown to scholars in the original Greek.

In the morning, growing bolder, he asked permission to carry the volume to Cairo, where it might be copied from beginning to end. Learning that the prior, the only man who had authority to give the permission, had started to Cairo, Tischendorf hurried after him, and — when he had overtaken him — pleaded his case so well that permission was given. But the scholar was not content; he wanted the original as well as his copy. To his great joy he was given permission to carry it to St. Petersburg, where it is to-day.

By many it is thought that this copy of the Bible was one of the fifty manuscripts prepared by order of Constantine for the principal churches of his empire. For these manuscripts only the finest materials and the most skillful copyists were to be employed. The fact that the Codex Sinaiticus was prepared in the most beautiful manner on the finest parchment, probably made from the skins of antelopes, would seem to go at least part way to prove this theory.

II

WHEN BIBLES WERE SCARCE

In the sixth century after Christ, when England had not yet been Christianized, the libraries of the monasteries of Ireland held precious portions of the Bible in Latin, and perhaps also in Greek and Hebrew. From these various manuscripts were made some of the first translations of parts of the Bible used in England.

The Irish monks guarded their treasured manuscripts most carefully. Those who were privileged to study them were forbidden to copy them for their own use. Historians tell of an incident that grew, so it is said, out of the failure of one man to whom a manuscript was lent, to regard the prohibition. Columba, famous as one of the early missionaries who introduced Christianity to Great Britain, while visiting Finian of Ulster, made a copy of his host's Psalter, working while everybody else in the house was asleep. When Finian discovered this he claimed the copy as his own

property. Because Columba declined to give it up, the case was appealed to Diarmad, king of Tara. After careful consideration, the king decided that Finian was in the right, since "to every book belongs its son-book (or copy), as to every cow belongs her calf!"

Not many years after the death of Columba a laborer named Cædmon was employed at the abbey of Whitby in Northumbria, England. He was an ignorant fellow, and so felt that he was unable to take part in the entertainment of those who gathered at the abbey on winter evenings. It was the custom to ask each person present to sing, accompanying himself on the harp. Cædmon, after listening to the songs of his companions, would steal away from the hall before he could be asked to take part in the entertainment. One night, after such an escape from the abbey, he must have fallen asleep thinking of his inability to sing, for he dreamed that a voice said, "Sing to me." When he answered that he could not sing, the voice said, "Sing to me the first beginning of created things." He thought he sang a hymn of praise to God. "The next morning"—so the incident is told in "The Ancestry of our English Bible"—"the story

of his dream brought him before the Lady Abbess, and he was found to be possessed of a divine gift. For as soon as the monks translated any portion of the Bible story out of the Latin text, he immediately sang it to the accompaniment of his harp in short lines of Saxon verse." The songs he sang were written down, and as "Cædmon's Paraphrase" of parts of the Scriptures they have come down to us.

Sixty-five years after the Paraphrase was written a monk named Bede died in the monastery of Jarrow. But before he died he wanted to finish the translation of the Gospel of John, which he had been making, because, as he said, "I do not want my boys (monks) to read a lie, or to work to no purpose after I am gone." When all was done but one chapter Bede was nearly gone. "Take thy pen and write quickly," Bede said to his scribe. At last all was done but one sentence, so the scribe told him. Again the word came, "Write quickly." The scribe wrote, and Bede died with a word of praise on his lips that he had been able to finish the work he longed to do.

More than one hundred years after Bede's death the good King Alfred expressed the

wish that all the free-born youths of his kingdom should employ themselves on nothing until they could first read well the English Scripture. In order to make the way easy for those who would do as he wished, he began a translation of the Psalms, but he died before the work was completed. He had, however, accomplished one purpose that has had its influence on all English law: he made the Ten Commandments a part of the law of the land. This is the way his version of seven of the Commandments reads in the quaint Anglo-Saxon:

Drihten wæs sprecende thaes word to Moyse and thus cwæth:

Ic eam Drihten thy God. Ic the sit gelædde of Aegypta londe and of heora theowdome.

Ne lufa thu othre fremde godas ofer me. . . .

Ara thinum fæder and thinre meder tha the Drihten sealde the, that thu sy thy leng libbende on eorthan.

Ne slea thu.

Ne stala thu.

Ne like thu dearnunga.

Ne saege thu lease gewitnesse with thinum nehstan.

Ne wilna thu thines nehstan yifes mid unrihte.

Near the close of the tenth century appeared Archbishop's Aelfric's Anglo-Saxon

Bible intended for reading in churches. Of course, the form of many of the letters was different from what we use to-day, but this is a fair representation of the words of Matt. 7:26, 27:

And aelc thaera the gehyrath thas mine word and tha ne wyrcth se bith gelic tham dysigan man tha getimbrode hys hus ofer sand-ceosel. Tha rinde hyt and thaer comun flod and bleowun windas and ahruron on that hus, and that hus feoll and hys hryre waes mycel.

For more than three hundred years not much attention was paid in England to Bible translation. The land was in confusion; there were wars and rumors of wars which took the attention of both rulers and priests. But in the latter part of the fourteenth century John Wyclif, who had been at the head of Balliol College, Oxford, and was later a country priest, determined to translate the Bible so that it might be read by the common people. The translation was made from the Vulgate, half of the Old Testament and all of the New Testament being the work of Wyclif himself, while the remainder was done by Nicholas of Hereford.

No sooner was this manuscript version bearing Wyclif's name completed than he was brought to trial, in 1378, on several charges, the most important being that he had made the Bible more "common and more open to laymen and to women than it was wont to be to clerks well learned and of good understanding, so that the pearl of the gospel is trodden under foot of swine."

Having triumphed over the enemies who sought his life, Wyclif began to plan to get the Bible before the common people. Few could afford a Bible of their own, so he gathered about himself a company of devoted men, called "Lollards," who went about the country teaching the Scriptures to all who would listen. One of Wyclif's enemies said, "You cannot travel anywhere in England but of every two men one will be a Lollard."

In 1384 John Wyclif was stricken with palsy while kneeling with his people in his own parish church. A monk who did not like him spoke of his death in vigorous words, calling him "the idol of heretics, the image of hypocrites, the restorer of schism, the storehouse of lies, the sink of flattery."

The Bible of Wyclif was revised soon after

JOHN WYCLIF

his death under the supervision of Richard Purvey, who—in a preface—told the story of his work:

A simpel creature hath translated the Scripture out of Latin into Englische. First, this simpel creature had much travayle with divers fellows and helpers to gather many old Bibles and other doctors and glosses to make one Latin Bible some deal true and then to study it anew the texte and any other help he might get, especially Lyra on the old Testament, which helped him much with this work. The third time to counsel with olde grammarians and olde divines of hard words and hard sentences how they might best be understood and translated, the fourth time to translate as clearly as he could to the sense, and to have many good fellows and cunnyng at the correcting of the translacioun. . . . A translator hath great nede to study well the sense both before and after, and then also he hath nede to live a clene life and be full devout in preiers, and have not his wit occupied about worldli things that the Holy Spyrit author of all wisdom and cunnynge and truthe dresse him for his work and suffer him not to err. . . . God grant to us all grace to ken well and to kepe well Holie Writ, and to suffer joiefulli some paine for it at the laste.

The circulation of Wyclif's Bible was so general, in spite of all difficulties in the way, that in 1414 all persons were legally warned against reading the Scriptures in English, on

pain of forfeiture of "land, catel, life and goods from their heyres forever." Efforts were made to destroy the books bearing Wyclif's name, yet one hundred and seventy copies have been preserved to this day.

The law against Wyclif's version was not enough to satisfy his enemies. They were not content until his bones had been burned and the ashes thrown into the river Swift. An old writer, speaking of this occurrence, said: "As the Swift bare them into the Severn, and the Severn into the narrow seas, and they again into the ocean, thus the ashes of Wyclif is an emblem of his doctrines, which is now dispersed over all the world."

Unfortunately, a single copy of Wyclif's Bible cost what would be equal to two hundred dollars of our money. Yet many who could not afford to own a copy gained access to one by paying a fee for the privilege. The case is recorded of one man who gave a load of hay that he might read a manuscript an hour a day for a number of days.

But better times were soon to come. Less than seventy years after the death of Wyclif the art of printing was invented, and cheap Bibles were made possible.

III

TYNDALE, THE MARTYR TRANSLATOR

In the early days of the sixteenth century a young Englishman named William Tyndale found it difficult to get access to the Bible. There were no printed copies in English, and the manuscripts of Wyclif's version—which was completed in 1382—were so expensive that they could be consulted only by the wealthy or by those who could use the few libraries so fortunate as to possess copies. The heart of the young man went out in pity to the millions who had not even his slender opportunity to read God's Word. So he made the resolution that shaped his life; and he stated it to one who was his opponent in a debate:

> If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth the plow shall know more of the Scripture than thou dost.

The task thus set himself by Tyndale would have been comparatively easy if he had been

content to print the text of one of Wyclif's manuscript Bibles. But he knew that Wyclif had merely translated into English the Vulgate, the Latin version of the Bible, and he was resolved to make a translation from the Greek and Hebrew. Moreover, the English of Wyclif's version was already out of date, as may be judged from his translation of Luke 10:30-34:

And Jhesu biheld, and seide, A man came doun from Jerusalem in to Jerico, and fel among theves, and thei robbiden hym, and woundiden hym, and wente awei, and leften the man half alyve. And it bifel that a prest cam doun the same weie, and passide forth, whanne he hadde seyn hym. Also a dekene, when he was bisidis the place, and saw hym, passide forth. But a Samaritan, goynge the weie, cam bisidis hym; and he saw hym, and had ruth on hym; and cam to hym, and bound together his woundis, and helde in oyle and wynne: and laid hym on his beast, and ledde in to an ostrie (inn), and dyd the cure of hym.

Tyndale knew that he faced almost certain death if he persisted in his attempt to give the Bible to the people, but he did not pause because of the danger. The man who, when a student at Oxford and when tutor to the boys of a country gentleman, had not hesitated to

defend what he believed to be the truth, even if by so doing he made enemies of powerful men, would not be held back from what he believed to be his duty merely by the fear of death.

He did not begin his translation at once, but first devoted years of study to gaining a more exact knowledge of Hebrew and Greek. He became such a skilled linguist that it was later said of him that he spoke Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Italian, Spanish and French as if each were his native tongue.

But his studies did not take him away from the people. As he had opportunity he left his books and went out to the village in the neighborhood of Bristol, where he was staying, and preached in the open air to all who would gather. There were those in authority who misunderstood his actions, and he was "reviled and rated as . . . a dog," to use his own expression.

Opposition only strengthened his purpose to give to the people the Bible in their own tongue that they might be able to stand against any errors of ignorant and designing men.

Persecution in the country led the young scholar to go, in 1523, to London, in the hope

that at the home of the Bishop of London he might find a refuge while he undertook his difficult task. But the bishop treated him coldly. Humphry Monmouth, an alderman of the city, opened his doors to the poor scholar, and showed him other kindnesses for which he later suffered imprisonment in the Tower of London. We owe it to this generous host that we have a picture of the six months spent by Tyndale with him:

> He studied most part of the day and of the night at his book; and he would eat but sodden meat by his good will, nor drink but single beer. I never saw him wear linen about him during the space he was with me.

A year's residence in the city showed Tyndale that if he would succeed in translating the Bible he must leave England and go to the Continent. So he went to Hamburg in 1524. There he was compelled to do his work in secret in order that his life might be preserved till the Book should be translated and printed. After a few months of arduous labor, the New Testament was completed. English friends provided funds for the printing at Cologne.

Peter Quentel, who was engaged to do the mechanical work, had run through the press a large number of the sheets required for the modest edition of three thousand copies, when word was brought to him that enemies of the Reformation had obtained from the Cologne Senate an order prohibiting the printing. Tyndale hastily went to Worms, carrying the sheets with him.

In Worms plans were changed. It became necessary to print an octavo edition as well as a quarto edition, because a description of the latter had been sent to England by spies. Of the six thousand copies prepared—three thousand of each edition—only three are known to-day, an imperfect copy of the quarto edition and two copies of the octavo edition!

The finished books were smuggled to England, hidden in cases of other goods. As the people came to know about them they clamored for them. It is said that some men of wealth were so eager for a copy that they were willing, if necessary, to give a hundred thousand pieces of money in exchange for one. The poor people, for whom the translation had been especially prepared, were as hungry for the books as the wealthy, and the king

and his counselors were as eager to secure the volumes as the people. However, their object was to get hold of the books only that they might destroy them.

Bonfires were made of the copies secured by the authorities. In London, Oxford and Antwerp many volumes were thus destroyed. Overtures were made to an English merchant named Pakington trading in Antwerp to buy up secretly all the copies he could find.

It was not known that Pakington, being a warm friend of Tyndale, was interested in the success of the new translation. So the Bishop of London did not hesitate to approach him. To his overtures the merchant replied:

"My lord, if it be your pleasure, I could do in this matter probably more than any merchant in England; so if it be your lordship's pleasure to pay for them—for I must disburse money for them—I will insure you to have every book that remains unsold."

"Gentle Master Pakington," was the reply, "do your diligence and get them for me, and I will gladly give you whatever they may cost for the books are naughty, and I intend surely to destroy them all, and to burn them at Paul's Cross."

Pakington went to Tyndale and asked him to sell him testaments. Tyndale was indignant till the explanation was given that by means of the high price offered for the books by those who would destroy them a much larger edition could be printed, and the good work of spreading knowledge of the Bible would be carried on and by the aid of the very men who sought to stop his work! The copies were furnished, the money paid and Tyndale's empty pockets were filled.

The Pentateuch and parts of the Prophets were next translated, and were printed in 1534. In the same year appeared a revision of the New Testament printed in 1526, which showed the extreme care of Tyndale's work. His greater familiarity with the Greek enabled him to correct many mistakes.

With such accuracy was the work done that the Authorized Version of 1611 and the Revised Version of 1881 retained many of his words and sentences. For instance, of the two hundred and two words in the difficult passage, Col. 1:9-17, one hundred and thirty-eight are retained in the Revised Version. Some of the words used look strange to us because of the old spelling, but most of them

are the words to which we are accustomed, as may be seen from Phil. 2:5-8:

> Let the same mynde be in you that was in Christ Jesu: which beynge in the shape of God, and thought it not robbery to be equall with God. Nevertheless, he made him silfe of no reputacion, and toke on him the shape of a servaunte, and became lyke unto men, and was found in his aparell as a man.

The study of the pure, vigorous English of this version played a wonderful part in fixing the form of the English language. We are using in our daily speech words and phrases put together by a half-starved exile living constantly in the shadow of sudden death.

The enmity of those in authority for Tyndale, increased as his version of the Bible found its way into the hearts of the people in spite of all efforts made to prevent this. To Antwerp—where he was living in 1535—he was pursued. He was arrested and imprisoned for more than a year. On October 6, 1536, he was strangled, and his body was burned. His last words were the prayer, "Lord, open the king of England's eyes."

Tyndale's monument is the English Bible for which he gave his life, for, as one modern

scholar has said: "The Bible of the English-speaking nations was very largely the work of one heroic, simple-minded, scholarly man, William Tyndale."

IV

FIVE SIXTEENTH CENTURY VERSIONS

The first complete printed Bible in English was issued one year before Tyndale's death. This volume was compiled by one Miles Coverdale, a monk who had acquired a taste for Bible study while he was in St. Augustine Monastery. He used Tyndale's translations as a basis, supplementing these by translations from other versions. By some means the favor of Henry VIII was secured for the new edition, and within a year after Tyndale's martyrdom the Bible was being sold openly to the English people.

In 1537 another compilation and translation came from the press. This was known as Matthew's Bible. It was so superior to Coverdale's Bible that on all sides it was heartily received. This is the story of the new version:

John Rogers frequently visited Tyndale in Vilvorde Castle, where the heroic Bible stu-

dent was confined. Tyndale, knowing that he would be unable to publish the parts of his Bible not yet given to the world, turned them over to Rogers. Rogers then issued a version of the Bible made up largely of Tyndale's work, though Coverdale's translation was used for the latter part of the Old Testament. Credit could not be given to Tyndale for his part, since his Bible had been forbidden. Rogers would not use his own name for what was not his work. So the book appeared with the name "Thomas Matthew" on the title-page. Possibly this was the name of a man of means who paid the expenses of the edition, though it may have been merely a name assumed by Rogers to save himself from taking the credit which belonged to Tyndale.

Henry VIII, to whom the new version was dedicated, gave permission for its open sale in England. He did not know that so much of it was the work of Tyndale. Thomas Cromwell, who had urged the approval of the Bible, was evidently afraid that the king might learn the truth, so he hastened to arrange with Coverdale to undertake a new translation. In this Coverdale was to be aided by many Greek and Hebrew scholars.

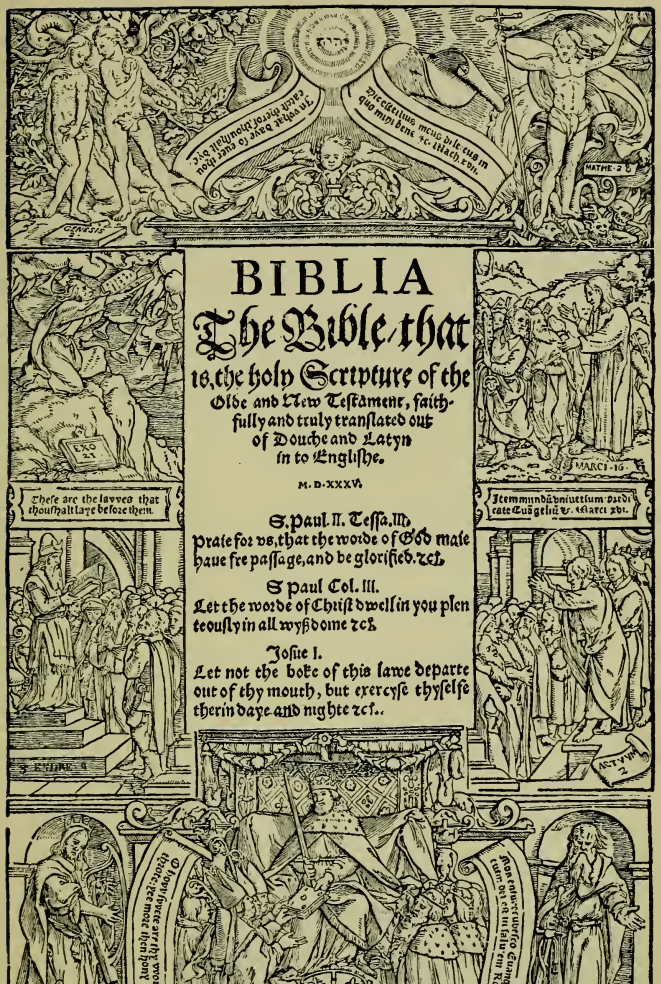
The version prepared under Coverdale's direction was printed in 1539. In reality it was only a hastily compiled version of Matthew's Bible.

Enemies of the circulation of the Bible interfered with the printing of this book in Paris, so the sheets were taken to England, and the work was completed there. After many vicissitudes it came from the binder's hands, a handsome book, so large that it was called "the Great Bible."

In 1538—less than thirteen years after the burning of Tyndale's Bible—orders were sent by the king's command to all ministers in the kingdom directing them to secure "one boke of the whole Bible, in the largest volume, in Englyshe, sett up in summe convenyent place within the churche that ye have cure of, whereat your parishioners may most commodiously resort to the same and rede it."

The people received the open Bible gladly. One writer says:

> It was wonderful to see with what joy this Book of God was received, not only among the learneder sort and those that were noted lovers of the Reformation, but generally all England over among all the vulgar and common people; and with what greedi-



Title Page of Coverdale's Bible

ness God's Word was read, and what resort to places where the reading of it was. Everybody that could bought the book or busily read it, or got others to read it to them, if they could not themselves, and divers more elderly people learned to read on purpose. And even little boys flocked among the rest to hear portions of the Holy Scripture read.

So great was the interest of the people in the Bibles placed in the churches that Bishop Bonner complained to the king that "diverse willful and unlearned persons inconsiderately and indiscreetly read the same, especially and chiefly at the times of divine service, yea in the time and declaration of the Word of God." And the king found it necessary to tell the minister to warn the people that they should use the Bible "most humbly and reverently," not "having thereof any open reasoning in your open taverns or alehouses."

The name of Richard Taverner must be written on the roll of sixteenth century heroes who suffered for his devotion to the Bible. When a young man he was imprisoned because he had been caught reading a copy of the New Testament, translated by Tyndale. Later, while practicing law, he devoted his spare time to preparing a new edition of the

Bible, on the basis of earlier translations. This was published in 1539. His knowledge of Greek enabled him to correct errors made by others, but his work as a whole was not remarkable. Taverner's Bible passed through several editions, yet the version was soon displaced by others destined to have more influence on the permanent form of the English text.

In later life Taverner was a preacher. If his sermons were all as strongly worded as the report that has come down to us of the introduction to a discourse given at Oxford, he must have been an oddity. On this occasion he said: "I have brought you some fine biscuits, baked in the oven of charity, carefully conserved for the chickens of the church, the sparrows of the spirit, and the sweet swallows of salvation."

Enemies of the Reformation in England were not pleased that the Bible was becoming so well known, so in 1543 they persuaded King Henry VIII to order that no laboring men and women "should read to themselves or to others, publicly or privately, any part of the Bible, under pain of imprisonment." When, however, Edward VI became king the

circulation of the Bible was again allowed. Thirty-five editions of the New Testament and thirteen of the entire Bible were issued during his brief reign from 1547 to 1553.

Mary, who began to reign in 1553, did her best to stop the circulation of the Bible. Even its public use was forbidden. Copies were taken from the churches and burned. Hundreds of reformers were burned at the stake, among these being John Rogers, the compiler of Matthew's Bible.

To escape the persecution in England many leaders of the Reformation fled to Geneva. During their exile a company of scholars among these prepared a new version of the Bible which was printed in 1560. The version was dedicated to Queen Elizabeth, Mary's successor, who gave permission for the printing and circulation of the book. The Geneva Bible—the first Bible printed in Roman type, instead of black letters—was received in eagerness. Before long it became the popular Bible of the hour.

The popularity of the Geneva Bible did not please the authorities of the established church, so the Archbishop of Canterbury ordered the revision of the Great Bible, in the hope that

the new work would displace the others. The translation was done by a company of scholars, several of whom were bishops. Their completed work—known as "the Bishops' Bible"—was published in 1568.

The new Bible was not popular. It was far inferior to the Geneva Bible, and the circulation was comparatively small. Only twenty editions were published, while one hundred and twenty editions of the Geneva Bible were printed before 1611.

The Rhemes New Testament of 1582 and the Douai Old Testament of 1609 did not play much of a part in the development of the modern English Bible, though these were the last of the early versions that brought about the fulfillment of Tyndale's dream to make the Bible familiar to every "boy that driveth the plow." They had paved the way for the King James Version of 1611, the version that displaced all other versions for nearly three hundred years.

V

THE STORY OF THE KING JAMES VERSION

Early in the sixteenth century the Puritans of England made complaint to King James I because of certain things in church government which they thought should be corrected. They did not dream that there could be anything better in store for them than the granting of their petitions for reforms. Yet, while their requests were denied, these bore fruit in one of the most momentous events in the history of the English Bible—the king's call for a new translation.

At the time the Puritans made their complaints, King James called a conference of leaders both of the Puritans and of the High Church party. The conference met at Hampton Court in 1604. On the second day Dr. Reynolds, president of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, complained that the rival Bible versions of the day—the Bishops' Bible, used by authority of Parliament in the churches, and

the Geneva Bible, the greater favorite with the people—were defective. Then he suggested that a new and more accurate version be prepared at once.

But for this suggestion perhaps the conference would not have found a place in historical records, for the advance plans made by the Puritans came to naught. However, the suggestion made by Dr. Reynolds, the leader of the Puritans, bore unexpected fruit. The idea of a new Bible version made by men chosen under his direction appealed to King James, who was proud of the scholarly attainments that secured for him the title, "the theologian king."

The Bishop of London objected to a new translation on the ground that "if every man's humor should be followed, there would be no end of translations." King James deferred to the objection by giving the direction that no marginal notes should be added to the new version, complaint having been made against previous versions because of such notes.

The Bishop of London was asked by the king to invite all men acquainted with Hebrew or Greek to make known through their bishops any changes they thought should be made in

the text. These changes were to be considered by fifty-four Oxford and Cambridge men, whom the king named. Only forty-seven of these took part in the work.

The revisers set about their work in 1607, three years after the king decided to undertake the revision. They were divided into five companies, each of which had its own portion of the Bible assigned to it. The companies met in Westminster, Oxford and Cambridge. The expenses of the revision were to be paid out of funds contributed for the purpose by the bishops. Unfortunately, thirty of the scholars received nothing but their entertainment while at work. The seventeen men to whom other payment was made met in London.

The king made known to the translators fifteen rules by which they were to be guided in their work. It is said that these rules were followed at the discretion of the revisers!

One of these rules directed that the division into chapters should be altered "either not at all, or as little as may be." This division first appeared in Tyndale's Bible; the division into verses first appeared in the Geneva Bible, it is said, having been prepared by Robert

Stephen while he was making a journey from Paris to Lyons!

Other rules decreed that "every particular man of each company" should translate the same chapter, and should then compare his work with that done by the rest of the company; that, when a book was completed by one company, the result should be sent for judgment to the other companies; and that any disagreement should be considered at a general meeting to take place when all had done their work.

The men chosen for the work were the best Hebrew and Greek scholars of the time. We know a little of some of them, through a writer of the day who says that Lively was "one of the first linguists of the world"; Reynolds was "a very treasury of erudition"; Killbye was "another Apollos"; Doune was "composed of Greek and industry"; and Miles Smith "had Hebrew at his finger ends."

The details of the work have not come down to us. There is not even a copy of one of the old versions used by the translators. A document like that, with notes of proposed readings, would be a valuable relic. But we are left to imagine the earnest discussions of

the men who gladly set to work on the task assigned them by the king. One writer says, "Never was a great production like our Authorized Version carried on with less knowledge handed down to posterity of the laborers, their methods and order of working."

It is known that when the three companies busy at Westminster and Cambridge and Oxford completed their work each sent the result to London in the hands of two of the company. There the six men met and received all the suggestions made, and decided on final renderings in the case of every passage concerning which there were different opinions.

How profitable it would be if we could read a report of the proceedings of the conferences held by these men! What a lesson we would have in the art of making concessions to those whose opinions differ from our own!

This final revision in London required nine months, while the work of the committee had occupied perhaps three years. Since three years had elapsed after the announcement of the proposed revision before the work was actually begun, the finished King James Version was not given to the world until 1611.

The year 1911, then, is to be observed by the Bible societies of the English-speaking world as the three hundredth anniversary of the appearance of the epoch-making Book.

While the King James Version has always been called the Authorized Version, there is no evidence that it was ever authorized by anybody in power. The title-page bears the words, "Appointed to be read in churches," but history does not tell by whom the appointment was made. We only know that the king ordered the revision.

Of course there was widespread opposition to the new version on the part of those who had become used to the Bishops' Bible or the Geneva Bible. But opposition gradually became approval as the readers learned that the best things in previous versions had been retained. Within a generation the superiority of the Authorized Version was generally acknowledged. No one can wonder at this who goes back to the old versions and finds there such phrases as: "The sin that hangeth so fast on us," and "As the hart brayeth for the rivers of water."

The King James Version was a triumph for William Tyndale, the martyr translator of

the early sixteenth century. His proscribed version was the basis of the versions on which the revisers of King James did their work, many of his expressions being transferred bodily by them. The Revised Version made in the latter part of the nineteenth century completed this triumph, for eight ninths of the words used in the Authorized Version appeared in the Revised Version.

VI

THE DEBT OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TO THE KING JAMES VERSION

Some years ago a professor of English literature in Yale University in a lecture called attention to the fact that Percy Bysshe Shelley, when a boy of eighteen, declared that it was absolutely essential to man's happiness that every leaf should be torn "from the accursed book of God." He himself scorned to think that the Bible influenced him in any way. Yet it is a fact that within eight years after these words were quoted by Shelley, he wrote this sentence in which he showed the influence of the Bible on his thought and his style: "Their errors have been weighed and have been found to be dust in the balance; if their sins were as scarlet, they are now white as snow; they have been washed in the blood of the mediator and redeemer, Time."

Shelley could not escape this unconscious

use of phrases of Scripture which have become a part of the effective language of the plain people. In spite of himself his thoughts found expression in the forceful, picturesque English employed by the translators of the King James Version.

In the same manner the speech and the writings of many who sneer at the teachings of the Bible bear unconscious testimony to the influence of the rugged English of the Bible on the language of every day, for, as has been said, "the Bible is of all books the most thoroughly woven into the thought and language of English-speaking people."

While in many cases the use of the phraseology of Scripture is accidental, there are writers and speakers almost without number who have determined definitely to read and reread the Bible that the study may give vigor to their style. Coleridge once insisted that the study of the Bible would elevate a writer's style. Masters of English have declared that the writer whose style departs far from Bible characteristics is not a writer of good English. Those authors whose works stand highest have learned this lesson so well that one professor of English recently said "it would

be worth while to read the Bible carefully and repeatedly, if only as a key to modern culture, for to those who are unfamiliar with its teachings and its diction much that is best in the English literature of the present century is as a sealed book."

The poetry of Shakspere is a single illustration of this influence of the Bible on literature. One who has made careful study of all the writings of the Bard of Avon says that he used more than five hundred and fifty biblical quotations, allusions, and so forth, that he quotes from fifty-four of the sixty-six biblical books, and that not one of his thirty-seven plays is without a scriptural reference.

Abraham Lincoln made constant use of Bible language—familiar to him from his boyhood. Whether he was talking in the privacy of his cabinet room or making one of his immortal addresses, scriptural allusions or quotations were continually on his tongue. Because the language of the Bible enabled him most effectually to make his impression on those who heard him, he employed its simple, direct, convincing words.

But it is not only the speech and the writings of famous men that are impregnated

with Scripture. The everyday language of the home, the school, the place of business is scriptural language. Those who are tempted to question this statement need only to read a list of common phrases noted by Dr. Henry van Dyke. Every one of these comes straight from the Bible:

"A good old age," "the wife of thy bosom," "the apple of his eye," "gathered to his fathers," "a mother in Israel," "a land flowing with milk and honey," "the windows of heaven," "the fountains of the great deep," "the valley of decision," "one little ewe lamb," "thou art the man," "a still small voice," "as the sparks fly upward," "miserable comforters," "the strife of tongues," "the pride of life," "from strength to strength," "as a dream when one awaketh," "the wings of the morning," "the highways and hedges," "the salt of the earth," "the burden and heat of the day," "as a drop of a bucket," "a pearl of great price," "decently and in order," "a thorn in the flesh," "a cloud of witnesses," "a crown of life."

This list is only a suggestion. The phrases are almost without number. Men use them without realizing what they are doing. They

are used because they express the thoughts so accurately, concisely and picturesquely. Those who hear them realize how apt they are, and they make use of them for themselves. Thus, year by year, the phrases become more and more part of the language.

Those who would know how the language of the Bible came to have such a vital effect on the English language must picture to themselves the situation of those who prepared the early English versions of the Bible. They lived in troublous times. It was long a crime to give the Bible to the common people; those who translated the Book and those who printed it took their lives in their hands. Yet they persisted in the work which they felt God had given them to do. Some paid for their faithfulness with their lives. Others spent years in exile. It is not strange that translations made by such men reflected what has been called the intensity of their feeling—the language they used was vigorous and expressive and it appealed to those who heard it. Some of the most characteristic phrases preserved in the Authorized Version were coined by Tyndale, who worked under the

shadow of the death which soon after came to him, and by the exiles at Geneva, whose hearts lovingly turned back to England.

It is true that the revisers appointed by King James had no such fears for their own safety, but they were excited by the stirring events that were constantly taking place about them. The effect was the same—the use of the terse, straightforward English words and phrases that go straight to the heart.

A second reason for the vigor of the style of the Authorized Version is the fact that when the translators did their work the English language was made up very largely of Anglo-Saxon words. Not many words from the Greek and Latin had been transferred into English. These words came in large numbers only with the growth of scientific studies in later years. Thus the translators were able to transfer into English the picturesqueness of Hebrew phrase in a way that would have been impossible in later years when classical words and phrases threatened to rob the language of its simplicity and picturesqueness.

Professor J. H. Gardiner of Harvard University has illustrated the gain to the language by the use of the warm, vivid, Anglo-Saxon

instead of the cold, colorless Greek and Latin, by referring to a phrase used by Tyndale in his epistle to the reader of his translation. He speaks there of "sucking out the sweet pith of the Scriptures." To-day the same idea would perhaps be expressed by the words, "Extracting the essence of Scripture." Professor Gardiner adds: "Thereby with what is to us the quaintness we should have lost also the eagerness and delight which color Tyndale's words with their halo of feeling."

As illustrations of picturesque phrases which would have been lost to the language if the translation had been a century later these have been noted: "The fat of the land," "the valley of the shadow of death," "the end of all flesh," "the seed of evildoers," "a soft answer," "a son of perdition."

The large portion of Anglo-Saxon words used by the translators of the Authorized Version is to be seen from a comparison frequently quoted. Gibbon used about seventy Anglo-Saxon words in every hundred. Johnson used about seventy-five, Swift eighty-nine, Shakspere about eighty-five, and the Authorized Version more than ninety. The Lord's Prayer as given in Matthew contains, besides

amen, sixty-five words, of which fifty-nine are Saxon, and six Latin.

The Authorized Version, prepared with a view to its use by the common people, went into the hands of the common people at a time when the language was yet in a formative state. As it speedily became the best-read book in the language—the only book known in most homes, in fact—naturally the Anglo-Saxon of the Bible became a permanent part of the speech of the people.

VII

THE REVISED VERSION OF 1881-1885

For more than two centuries the King James Version was the accepted translation of the English Bible. Many thought that it would be the final translation.

But during the nineteenth century there were so many discoveries of important biblical manuscripts—some of earlier date than any before known—that scholars began asking if it would not be wise to have a new translation on the basis of a comparison of these manuscripts with those known to the makers of the King James Version. Diligent study of some of the newly discovered manuscripts revealed differences between these and the manuscripts on which the Authorized Version was based. The Sinaitic manuscript especially (see Chapter I) gave many different readings.

As early as 1857 a new translation of the Gospel of John and of the Epistles of Paul was published by five English scholars. The entire Bible was soon after translated by other

scholars, acting independently of any authority. Another translation was given to the public by an American scholar in 1869. Other partial translations were made on both sides of the Atlantic.

Thus the way was paved for the resolution presented February 10, 1870, by Bishop Wilberforce in the Upper House of the Convocation of Canterbury. He suggested the appointment of a committee to report on the advisability of revising the Authorized Version of the New Testament. Bishop Ellicott —one of the translators of 1857, referred to in the previous paragraph—supported the resolution. The committee appointed was instructed to include the advisability of retranslating the Old Testament in their report.

In May, 1870, the committee reported urging the importance of the proposed translation. A revision committee — made up of members of the Houses of Convocation—was then appointed, with instructions to invite "the coöperation of any, eminent of scholarship, to whatever nation or religious body they may belong." The sixteen members of the original committee—all identified with the Church of England—invited representatives of other

evangelical churches to join them, until there were fifty-four revisers in all.

Like the King James Version, the new revision was based on certain definitely stated principles. It was proposed — among other things—"to introduce as few alterations as possible into the text of the Authorized Version consistent with faithfulness," "to limit, as far as possible, the expression of such alterations to the language of the Authorized and other earlier English versions," and "to revise the headings of chapters and pages, paragraphs, italics and punctuations."

To twenty-seven men was intrusted the work of the Old Testament translation, while the remaining twenty-seven agreed to undertake the translation of the New Testament. The New Testament section began work on June 22, 1870, while the Old Testament section first met eighty days later in the famous Jerusalem Chamber of Westminster Abbey, already famous in church history because there the Westminster Confession had been written and the Prayer Book Revision of 1689 had been made. The revisers usually met four days each month, ten months in the year, for ten years and a half. At intervals the two com-

panies had a joint session lasting about ten days, sixteen hours each day.

At the end of six years the New Testament company had succeeded in completing their task, all differences of opinion having been settled by a majority vote. Then they went over the translation a second time, settling all differences by a two-thirds vote. Then two and one half years more were required.

But the New Testament was not yet ready for publication. In 1870, Dr. Angus, representing the British revision, had visited America and had proposed that American scholars coöperate with the British Revision Committee. They were to examine diligently the first draft of the work of the British revisers and return their work with their suggestions. Then they were to examine the second draft sent from England, embodying as many of the suggestions as were adopted, and returning this also with their further suggestions. The British Revision would take final shape only after consideration of the second lot of suggestions from America.

As a result thirty men, representing many denominations, met in the Bible House in New York City, beginning October 4, 1872, and

divided themselves into Old and New Testament companies. The companies were to work with the British revisers in accordance with these stipulations:

The English revisers promise to send confidentially their Revision in all its stages to the American Revisers, to take all the American suggestions into special consideration before the conclusion of their labors, to furnish them before publications with copies of the Revision in its final form, and to allow them to present, in an Appendix to the Revised Scriptures, all the remaining differences of reading and rendering of importance, which the English Committee should decline to adopt; while, on the other hand, the American Revisers pledge themselves to give their moral support to the authorized editions of the University Presses, with a view to their freest circulation within the United States, and not to issue an edition of their own, for a term of fourteen years.

After the completion by the British New Testament section of the second stage of the work, two years more were occupied in discussing, adopting or rejecting the suggestions of the American New Testament section, and in arranging final details.

The first printed copy of the resultant revision came from the press May 17, 1881. The Old Testament section required fourteen

years for their task. During this time the revisers spent seven hundred and ninety-two days in conference, going over their work twice, and considering the suggestions from America.

The first printed copy of the entire Revised Bible appeared on May 19, 1885—the final result of at least six laborious revisions—two of these being made in America and four in London.

VIII

THE AMERICAN STANDARD VERSION

A short time before the expiration of the fourteen years during which the American Committee had agreed to give no sanction to the publication of any other edition of the Revised Version than that issued by the University Presses of England, an edition called by its publishers "The American Revised Version" was given to the public. This edition bore the imprint of the University Presses. British publishers had incorporated in the text the changes proposed years before by the American Committee which had been rejected at the time by the British Committee and inserted in the American Appendix to the Revision of 1881-1885.

In the meantime the American Committee had maintained its organization, holding frequent meetings. The services of the scholars who made up the committee were rendered without pay. The result of their labor of love

was given to Bible readers on August 26, 1901, in the American Standard Edition of the Revised Bible. This edition did far more than incorporate in the text the textual changes proposed by the American Committee to the British revisers. These changes were first thoroughly revised in accordance with later knowledge gained through new study of the ancient manuscripts, especially in the light of important discoveries made by explorers in Bible lands. Many verbal changes were also made, words in common use in America being substituted for words which—though intelligible enough to residents of Great Britain—were not entirely clear to the average American reader.

It was the effort of both British and American revisers to retain the old readings except where diligent comparison of manuscripts showed that the old readings were incorrect, or where words or phrases had been archaic and therefore unintelligible. Many of the changes adopted make clear passages before obscure, as—for instance—Job 19:26. The King James Version reads: "And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet

in my flesh shall I see God." The American Standard Version says: "And after my skin, even this body, is destroyed, then without my flesh shall I see God." Another example is Hebrews 11:1, 2, which reads in the Old Version: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report." In the American Standard Version the reading is: "Now faith is assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen. For therein the elders had witness borne to them."

Examples of the substitution of modern words for archaic expressions are: "Settings" for "ouches," "baggage" for "stuff," "find" for "amerced," "traders" for "chapmen," "umpire" for "daysman," "hinder" for "let."

The American Standard Version has been accepted by many who look upon it as the best translation of the Bible in the English language. There are many others who find it impossible to give up the King James Version, whose words and phrases have become dear to them by reason of years of familiarity.

But whether one chooses to read the King

James Version or the Revised Version, it is the Word of God he takes in his hand—the Word preserved so wonderfully through the ages—the Word of which God says: "It shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please."